names of the countries where posts of Ambassadors/High Commissioners are presently lying vacant are as follows:

1.China

2. Lebanon

3. Madagascar

4. Mozambique

5. Maldives

6. Trinidad and Tobago

7. Uganda

8. DPR Korea

(b) and (c) All posts of Ambassadors and High Commissioners are IFS cadre posts and normally IFS officers of requisite seniority and experience are appointed by the Government against these posts. However, from time to time Government also appoints against particular posts individuals who have distinguished themselves in public service or other fields. At present there are 86 serving IFS officers and one serving IAS officer who are Ambassador/ High Commissioners. There are 8 retired officials in the category of individuals who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields serving in this capacity.

Border dispute with China

162. SHRI K. VASUDEVA PANICKER:
SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV:
SHRI SATYA PAL MALIK:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any talks to resolve border dispute with China have been held recently; and

(b) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) and (b) At the seventh Round of official level Talks between India and China held in Beijing from July 21 to 23, 1986 substantive discussions were held on the boundary question. The Chinese side reiterated that the Eastern sector was the area of "largest dispute". In response, the Indian side clearly enunciated our stand and pointed out that the India-China boundary in the Eastern sector was the traditional customary line which was well known and had, in addition, received sanction by treaty and administrative jurisdiction. During this round, discussions also commenced on the Western sector.

The boundary question was also taken up by the then External Affairs Minister, Shri P Shiv Shanker, in his meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wu Xueqian on 18th September, 1986 in New York.

Indian Government approached by the United States for release of hostages in Lebanon

163. SHRI SURENDRA SINGH THAKUR:
SHRI TALARI MANOHAR:
SHRI SATYA PAL MALIK:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that US Government have approached the Indian Government for mediation or help in the release of hostages in Lebanon; and

(b) if so, what is the reaction of the Indian Government thereto and the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) and (b) In the context of the four persons taken hostage in Lebanon there are three Americans and one is an Indian national the US Government has been in contact with Government on the subject while maintaining that the release of the Indian national taken hostage is the responsibility of the Government of India. Government have been energetically approaching all Governments and agencies which may have